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An Interview with Professor Vikas Sharma on Changing Political and Social Landscape

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During recent times, the world has witnessed a number of changes. Some good, some bad. The turmoil is reaching every corner of the world. At one place, there are wars, at another, there are terrorist attacks. Trade war is taking shape at one place, and unprecedented partnerships are coming into existence at another. The concept of peace has changed a lot in these times. Now it means how much one party can pressurise the other party to act in a way they would like. In capitalist terms, profit means peace. The value of human life has diminished to a great extent, and only profit matters. These changes are affecting the very foundation of human civilisation, and humans have evolved from rational beings to commodities.

In such times, it becomes necessary to look around ourselves and act in a way that benefits us and our kin. If the world is bent on making our lives difficult, it is necessary for us to find alternatives. At the end of the day, this new world believes in "everyone for their own." *"Vasudhaiv Kutumbakam"* can never be followed in a one-sided fashion.

To address these changes, there follows an interview with Professor Vikas Sharma, a prolific writer who has a brilliant understanding of the political and social landscape. He is a staunch follower of realism and has already discussed a number of social issues in his novels. This interview, addressing both the world and Indian political and social phenomena, also discusses Professor Sharma's literary approach to benefit the budding writers.

Interviewer: Sir, recently, the American President Donald Trump has imposed a fifty percent tariff on Indian goods. So, what do you think its effects are going to be on the economy of our country? And was this a decision of a sane man?

Interviewee: To answer the last part of your question first, no, these actions are not of a sane man. These actions are of a man who is guided by his instincts and lives for the attention of others. These actions are the signifiers of his desperation. The thing is the USA's economic rule over the world is coming to an end and digesting it seems a little tough for people like Trump. India's GDP growth has startled a lot of Western countries, and above all, the USA. So, these are nothing but the actions of a desperate man who wants to prove to his voters that he is worthy of the position of president. The whole "making America great again" is nothing but forcing other economies to limit their development. It's a silent war.

Even Nikki Haley, the former U.S. Ambassador to the U.N., cautioned Trump against this Tariff war against India. She said that it is going to be a 'strategic disaster'. Even the economic expert of America, Professor Jeffrey Sachs has also warned America against this action. Now, everyone knows that the "American Dream" is taking its last breath and the people who care for the U.S. are trying to bring Trump to the right state of mind, but he is not listening.

This Tariff of Trump affects almost two percent of our GDP, as seventy percent of our exports will be affected by it. Now it's necessary for India to take its business elsewhere. It's not like the USA is the only country in the world. Though it's a crisis, it's also an opportunity for us to diversify our trade. We should look towards EU, ASEAN, and BRICS markets to strengthen our exports. Though our economy is mostly driven by internal consumption, it is still necessary to secure our exports network.

Interviewer: In your novels, you tend to praise both Prime Minister Modi and Jawaharlal Nehru. How can anyone be a supporter of two opposite ideologies?

Interviewee: I don't support ideologies; I support what is right. I am not a staunch supporter of ideology. I don't blindly follow such things. I am a writer, and I have some responsibility towards society. The followers of ideologies tend to support even the wrong things due to their blind devotion. I cannot afford to do that.

I praise the right and criticise the wrong. I do praise Nehru, but I don't support his mistakes in the conflict over Kashmir, which he took to the UN, and in the Indo-China War. But it is also the fact that he took the reins of the country in a very depleted state, and he took it very far. He started the five-year plans. His foreign policy of not interfering with other countries and not letting others interfere with India is still followed. And as for Prime Minister Narendra Modi, his work speaks for itself. Defence has reached new heights, India has become the fourth biggest economy in the world, and we are becoming more and more self-dependent under his rule. Triple Talaq and Article 370 were not easy to abolish, but he did. Though reforms are required when it comes to caste-reservation and education, everything else is going rather smoothly. As for caste reservation, it is time to get rid of it and instead, a reservation to economically weaker sections, irrespective of their castes, should be given. So, in short, I support the interests of my country.

Interviewer: Sir, during the conflict with Pakistan after Operation Sindoor, opposition first asked to put a stop to the tensions, and when ceasefire was announced, they started saying that 'Modi is a coward.' What do you make of this?

Interviewee: You know, politics is a very complex process. But I am not in favour of using it when the interests of the whole country are at stake. Operation Sindoor warranted unity. Our armed forces needed every Indian citizen united. It was not a matter of politics. But the opposition saw the whole ordeal as an opportunity. They didn't care about India's sovereignty, the safety of its citizens, or its integrity. They politicised the whole event to suit their purpose. They questioned our forces' action against terrorists and asked for proofs, and they also ridiculed the decision of the ceasefire, which was taken to ensure the safety of our citizens. It should be noted that India had already neutralised the threat of terrorism, which was responsible for the Pehalganv attack. So, announcing a ceasefire in no way was a demerit to Indian interests. But the opposition now believes in petty politics and nothing more.

Interviewer: Regarding this particular subject, please give your views on Trump's meddling in the conflict between India and Pakistan.

Interviewee: Donald Trump is a self-serving personality. The USA uses its power of weaponry to impose its views on others. Trump wants the Nobel Peace Prize, and we can confirm that from the recent statement of the White House, where they demanded the same themselves. India rejected all his claims of meddling, but he kept the narrative alive. That's the power of weapons. Spreading lies is really easy for the USA. As Indians, we should not take him seriously. He is a businessman; he is an expert in lying.

Interviewer: Coming to your novels, *Sana* is said to be semi-autobiographical in nature. Please shed some light on the characters that you have taken from real life.

Interviewee: My novels are always filled with realistic elements. My surroundings are filled with such interesting stories that I seldom have to rely on imagination. The character of Sana is completely real. She is modelled after one of my students. Everything she does is a reflection of the real person's deeds. Her illicit affairs, her degenerate behaviour, selfish nature, and tendency to use others are described exactly as the real person possessed. In fact, the real deal was more heinous. The character Chandan, boyfriend of Sana, is also a replica of one of my students. The characters of Katty and Tia are also autobiographical to some extent.

Interviewer: Sir, you have recently published a book on Indian Poetics, named *Indian Poetics: A Glance into Indian Aesthetics*. You are a professor of English, but still you thought of writing a book on a staunchly Indian topic. Teaching is another thing but doing research on such a level is another. What motivated you to write this book?

Interviewee: Being a professor of English doesn't mean that you have to stay away from your culture and literature. My family background has been of Academics who have had a lot of interest in Hindi and Sanskrit Literature. So, I was pretty much acquainted with such subjects.

Now we also teach the English translations of Indian Literary theories in Indian universities. The Indian Knowledge System also advocates for their revival and teaching. But I felt that there was something missing. We didn't have adequate textbooks of Indian theories in English. Textbooks which had everything a student needs in one place. So, I took some major theories and started writing this book. Then I felt that this is not the time to show my scholarship and command over the English Language. It was important for me to write a book that can be easily comprehended by the students without worrying about the technical terms. And therefore, you have it, a book that has everything an Indian university student needs at one place and in a language that is easy to understand. That is what motivated me.

Interviewer: You wrote a novel called *498A: Fears and Dreams*. What was your motivation behind writing it?

Interviewee: As I always say, all of my motivations come from my own life. There were two cases that I personally witnessed that became the foundation for this novel. The first case involved one of my professor friend's English lecturer son posted at Ramnagar. He and his family had to face a fake police case because of his daughter-in-law. And the second case was of one of my students. She was killed by her in-laws for dowry. So, I wanted to show that this law had both good as well as bad sides and both need to be recognised.

Interviewer: What are your views on Big Beautiful Bill?
Interviewee: This bill shows Trump's short-sightedness. Increasing taxes cannot be the solution. A 1 percent Remittance tax is going to prove harsh for India. India receives nearly 28 percent remittances from the US. The families which depend on this remittance are going to suffer the most. I think India should diversify its remittance channels to maintain a balance and to avoid such setbacks.
Interviewer: The organisation, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh or RSS, is criticized a lot by various political parties these days. Do you think that RSS deserves such hate?
Interviewee: No, I don't think so. RSS is a great organisation that has been serving Bharat since before Independence. You can see examples in the present as well. Whenever natural disasters hit any part of India, the Swayamsevaks of this organisation are always ready to help the citizens. They don't do any bias between any religion when such situations emerge. And still, they are accused of creating intolerance between different religions. But I believe in the truth, and the truth is that we need this organisation, Bharat needs this organisation. Whatever the opposition parties are doing, is politics. But this politics is also important as such things are necessary to control unchecked power.
Interviewer: Sir, what do you think of language movements in different parts of India? Do you think that they have now turned into language wars?
Interviewee: There is no need to think that they are turning into language wars. These movements are limited to a limited number of the population of the states concerned. And that population is politically motivated. I think that common people are being influenced by such politically motivated sections. This needs to be addressed as soon as possible. As I said, it's not a war, but if this continues, a rift will form between the people of this beautiful country. The government needs to intervene soon.
Interviewer: There has been a lot of controversy regarding Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, or Veer Savarkar. He was called ‘Maafiveer’ by certain people. Do you think such criticism is in good taste?
Interviewee: No, I don’t think that such things should be said about people who gave their lives for our country. V.D. Savarkar played a very important role in awakening the spirit of Bharat among the citizens. Without this spirit, attaining freedom would have been almost impossible. He authored *The Indian War of Independence, 1857,* formed Abhinav Bharat and the Free India Society for attracting the populace to attain freedom from British rule. Calling him ‘Mafiveer’ just because he wrote a letter to the British government to release him. Those who say that should remember that he also served a sentence in the cellular jail and faced such atrocities that this generation, which only knows how to run its mouth, can never understand. That request to release

was necessary. He knew he would be worth more to the nation when he was in contact with its citizens. Rotting in jail could have done nothing for the country. Turning everything into politics should be discouraged, and responsible people should exercise caution before speaking.

Interviewer: Your novel *Media Revolution 2030* shows corruption and politics in universities. What was the reason behind writing it?

Interviewee: It is my job as a writer to show the realities of the world. My responsibilities cannot be tempered by anyone or any pressure. I have witnessed a lot of corruption. Therefore, I thought to put my observations into words. Though my own vice-chancellor got angry at me for writing this novel. She has marginalized me in university, and she always tries to find opportunities to create problems for me. And she has already created a lot of problems for me in university. But my responsibilities kept on pushing me to write the truth.

Interviewer: The recently passed *Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Bill, 2025*, in India has created significant controversy in the gaming industry. What do you think about it?

Interviewee: It was a much-awaited decision. It was necessary to put a stop to all of this. The games that promote gambling are getting quite addictive these days. People are losing their hard-earned money just to play the game. And it is the young generation that is being affected the most. For the sake of the future of Bharat, it is necessary to get rid of these things. But it is not like the government is banning every game there is. In reality, this bill advocates the promotion of Esports. It is the first time that the government has recognised Esports as real sports. Online social gaming is also being promoted. It is all for saving our people from the fatal and severe effects of money games.

Interviewer: Sir, the young generation is looking for a lifestyle that is individualistic in nature. What are your views on changing human relations?

Interviewee: Human relations are not what they used to be. There has been a drastic change. This change is the result of extensive privatisation. The sense of society is failing to develop in the young generation due to their excessive involvement in their own as they would not be able to earn a living if their sole purpose is not their career. The 9-to-5 system cuts a person from society and even family altogether. I don't think that it will be long before people start to remain aloof in other people's misery.

Interviewer: In Bihar, *Special Intensive Revision* (SIR) is going on. What do you think about this? Is the opposition right in opposing this Revision?

Interviewee: It is not hidden from anyone that there is no hundred percent transparency in the Indian Election System. People have been using the votes of the deceased and who have shifted

out permanently illegally. This step of revising the voter list by removing such voters is going to ensure considerably more transparency. It should have been done sooner. Though the stance of opposition seems a bit against SIR but their arguments are logical as well. There should be transparency in such processes. But they are alleging things in a very uncivilised way. They should behave like responsible opposition. And they are unable to substantiate their allegations against the Election Commission of India with concrete evidence.

Interviewer: Sir, in the NCR region, more importance is given to the English language. In fact, Hindi is scoffed at. And the corporate culture is behind all this. Do you think it is all right to ignore and disrespect our mother tongue like this?

Interviewee: No, it is not acceptable at all. I can understand that the English language is required to deal with foreign clients and people from non-Hindi-speaking parts of India but hailing it as something that is an identifier of the upper class is not right. It's just a language. And I don't think that corporate culture is the culprit here. Most of the Japanese urban population works in the corporate industries. Instead of losing their culture and language, they have made it so that the others have to follow their culture and learn their language to get in contact. It is the colonial mindset of Indian people, and mostly of those who own the corporate sector, that is responsible for such a condition of Hindi. It is necessary that some steps be taken to safeguard our own language and culture. Otherwise, we would be nothing more than strangers who have borrowed an identity that is not their own.

Interviewer: Sir, you authored a book named *Female Gaze in Bollywood.* In that you talked about the objectification of women. But you never discussed how the male body, as well, is being used for attracting an audience and money. Isn't that objectification too?

Interviewee: The book I wrote discusses only half of the population. I have never refuted the argument that males are being objectified as well. And of course, they are being objectified. But the objectification of women is proportionally higher. Bollywood still doesn't see them as people. They are just bodies. But that doesn't mean that the objectification of males should be ignored completely. It is necessary for us to see people as people and not as bodies, and this transformation would do a lot of good to Bollywood.

Interviewer: You wrote your novel *Love and Ego* in 2024. It has been a year since then, and the war between Russia and Ukraine is not likely to end anytime soon. Would you like to say anything about that?

Interviewee: First of all, it is not a war between Russia and Ukraine. It is a war between Russia and NATO countries. Ukraine is only being used as a pawn to fight someone else's war. Ideally, it should have ended, but practical thinking says that there is too much at stake here. The integrity of Russia and the egos of the Nato countries and the West would not let this war end this easily. The only thing we can do is wait and watch.

Interviewer: Sir, your novels tend to be short in length. They don't exceed 200 pages. Why is that?
Interviewee: The short length of my novels is deliberate. People don't have so much time that they can read a 500-page novel. This era of busy life forces a person to do things in a hurry. I want my readers to entertain themselves as well as learn something from my novels. And that is why I have to keep them short so that they can finish them in two to three sittings without getting anxious.
Interviewer: Sir, your critics say that in an effort to write a lot of novels, you repeat things in them. Is that true?
Interviewee: Yes, it's true that I repeat things in my novels. But it is indeed false that I do that to increase the number of my novels. I repeat things because life repeats itself. We wake up, bathe, have breakfast, and so on every day. Isn't it repetition? And does this repetition make life boring? No. Some things are meant to be repeated. And I am the writer of life itself.
Interviewer: Sir, tell us something about your future projects.
Interviewee: I am writing a novel on Generation-G, corruption in universities, NEP and AI. Secondly, I'm working on a book on six Modern British Poets.

About the Interviewee:

Vikas Sharma has written a remarkable number of novels in a very short amount of time of 7 years, starting from the Hindi Novel "Raah Ke Patthar" followed by his English novels namely, *Love's Not Times's Fool, I.A.S. Today, Medicine: Light in Twilight, 498A: Fears and Dreams, Hope Against Hope, Ashes and Fire, Ideas and Events, Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow, SANA, Media Revolution 2030, Love and Ego and latest one, Honey Trap*. At present, he is the General Secretary of The Association for English Studies of India (AESI) and Professor in the Department of English at Chaudhary Charan Singh University, Meerut (UP). He has published more than sixty research papers and successfully guided twenty-eight PhD scholars. His commitment to the academic field is shown in his efforts as an editorial board member of different esteemed journals.

He has written seven books of Literary Criticism: *Treatment of History in Indian English Novels, Romantic Sensibility in the Prose Works, Essays and Journals of Emerson and Thoreau, Novel as an Art Form, Six Major Poets, Female Gaze in Bollywood, Beyond the Rainbow: The Shades of Queer Love* and *Indian Poetics: A Glance into Indian Aesthetics*. His works are prescribed in the syllabi of undergraduate and postgraduate classes of several universities. More than 50 PhDs are underway on his works, as well as twelve reference books have already been published on his novels.

About the Interviewer:

Kamal Kant Sharma is an aspiring writer who writes both fiction and academic content. Interested in the mythic past of India, he authored his first book, *Salvaging the Creation: The Revenge of the Unwanted,* a novel weaving together such countless mythologies, in 2023. He is currently serving as an Assistant Professor of English at the IIMT College of Law, Greater Noida. His book, *Vikas Sharma and His Literary Works: Defictionalising the Reality,* launched recently in the month of April, discusses twelve of Professor Vikas Sharma's novels in the light of various subjects in an attempt to unearth the psyche behind Professor Sharma's writings. He has also co-edited a book called *Virtues and Vices: The Moral Tug-of-War in Vikas Sharma's Writings*.